

HECB Legislative Issues: 2006 Status Report

This status report reflects legislative activity through March 20, 2006

Items marked with an asterisk were reported previously as not passing out of committee.

Issue	HECB Perspective	Legislative Status
Supplemental operating and capital budgets	The HECB in December 2005 made recommendations to the legislature for supplemental operating and capital budget enhancements for higher education during the 2006-07 fiscal year.	<p>The final conference budget is summarized under Tab 7 of today's agenda packet.</p> <p>Governor Gregoire's proposed supplemental budgets were summarized under Tab 6 of the board's January 26 agenda packet. The House and Senate versions were summarized under Tab 9 of the board's February 23 agenda packet.</p>
Regional planning and branch campus expansion	The HECB has undertaken a study of higher education needs and options in the Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties region as directed in the 2005-07 capital budget. HECB staff also worked during the interim with a group of Tri-Cities education and community leaders to address issues that arose during the legislature's consideration of branch campus legislation (HB 1794) during the 2005 session.	<p>SHB 2867 was passed by the legislature. The bill will require WSU-Tri-Cities to develop a plan for expanding into a four-year institution. The plan is to identify new degree programs and course offerings focused on areas of specific need in higher education in southeastern Washington. The plan is to be submitted to the HECB and the legislature by Nov. 30, 2006. Beginning fall 2007, WSU-TC may begin (subject to HECB approval) admitting lower-division students directly into programs beyond biotechnology.</p> <p>SHB 3113 was passed by the legislature. The bill declares legislative intent to fund enrollment of 250 FTEs at the upper division and graduate levels to meet the higher education needs of the North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties (NSIS) region. The bill declares that a university center model centered on a community college campus shall be used. Enrollment is to begin in fall 2006. The budget includes \$325,000 for implementation and clarifies that the FTEs are not new enrollments.</p>
Tuition waivers		<p>SHB 1986 did not pass. The bill would have directed the HECB to study current tuition waiver practices.</p> <p>SHB 2233 was passed by the legislature. The bill requires the institutions to participate in outreach activities to increase the number of tuition waivers received by veterans.</p>

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Financial aid legislation	By law, the HECB administers all state financial aid programs and coordinates state and federal assistance.	More than a dozen bills were introduced this session to expand or create new financial aid programs, including proposals for grants, scholarships, and state-sponsored loans to students.
Scholarships	The HECB currently administers the Washington Scholars program to recognize top-performing high school students, and is administering the final year of the Promise Scholarship.	<p>SB 6744* did not pass. The bill would have provided 100 GET units as scholarships to students who pass the WASL on the first try and maintain a 3.5 G.P.A. in high school, and whose family incomes do not exceed 100 percent of the state median.</p> <p>SSB 6780 did not pass. The bill would have established a “math-science scholar” high school diploma and called for full-tuition scholarships for students who earn the diploma and pursue math-science studies in college.</p>
Conditional scholarships	The HECB administers conditional scholarship and loan repayment programs for students seeking to enter the teaching and health care professions.	<p>SSB 6783* did not pass. The bill would have created a conditional scholarship and loan repayment program for students who enter math or science-based professions.</p> <p>SHB 2989 and SB 6639* did not pass. Instead, funding for conditional scholarships for prospective math and science teachers was included in the budget.</p> <p>SSB 6171 did not pass. Instead, funding for conditional scholarships to students who wish to earn teaching certificates for bilingual education or special education was included in the budget.</p>
Grants	The state’s largest higher education grant program is the HECB’s State Need Grant, which serves about 60,000 students per year.	ESSHB 2630 did not pass. Several provisions of the bill were instead passed in the budget. The budget calls for the SBCTC to work with the WTECB and a nonprofit organization to market standards and credentials in high-demand occupations to educational institutions and employers. The SBCTC will pilot an “opportunity grant” program that tests strategies for increasing access to postsecondary education for low-income students in job-specific programs. And, the WTECB (in cooperation with the SBCTC) will study barriers to job training access and completion.
Loans	The HECB does not administer direct loans to students. Guaranteed student loans are a major component of the federal government’s student assistance program.	SB 6271* did not pass. The bill would have established zero-interest college loans, administered by the HECB, for eligible students whose family incomes do not exceed 135 percent of the state median.

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Reinstatement of Promise Scholarship program	The biennial state operating budget calls for elimination of the Promise Scholarship program following the 2005-06 academic year.	SB 6811* did not pass. The bill would have restored the Promise Scholarship program and provided about \$6 million for scholarships in 2006-07. The six-year-old program has provided two-year scholarships to thousands of students who graduated at the top of their high school classes and whose family incomes do not exceed 135 percent of the state median.
Tax Incentives	The HECB administers the state work study program and has identified a need for more students in math- and science-related fields.	SB 6293* did not pass. The bill would have authorized tax incentives for employers that hire students in math and science programs.
Running Start	The HECB supports expanding “dual credit” programs that provide students with credit toward both high school and college graduation.	ESSB 5360 did not pass. The bill would have directed OSPI, with assistance from the SBCTC and HECB, to complete a study of the performance and funding of Running Start students.
Technology priorities	The HECB’s recent statewide and regional needs assessment identified several technology-intensive academic fields that should be expanded to meet student, employer, and community needs.	SHB 2817 passed the legislature. This measure declares a state priority to encourage institutions to increase participation and completion of degree programs in engineering, technology, biotechnology, sciences, computer sciences, and mathematics. Institutions are required to report to the HECB and the legislature by November 2008 on the student demand for such programs, additional findings, and proposed alternatives for meeting such demand. HECB is required to report biennially on enrollments, degrees conferred, expenditures and public-private partnerships established relating to these fields.
False academic credentials	The HECB grants authority for certain institutions to issue degrees in Washington.	ESHB 2507 passed. Under this measure, degree-granting institutions operating in Washington would be required to be accredited, have an application for accreditation pending, or be granted a waiver or exemption from the accreditation requirement by the HECB. Granting a false academic credential would become a class C felony. Knowingly using a false academic credential (for example, on a resume) would become a gross misdemeanor.

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Higher Education Strategic Planning	The HECB develops a <i>Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education</i> every four years.	HB 1434* did not pass. The bill would have set targets for the state's investment in higher education by adding enrollments and making sweeping changes to tuition and financial aid. The bill also would have required public colleges and universities to enter into performance contracts with the state.
Cost of course materials	The HECB's enabling statute, as modified by SHB 3103, requires the board to serve as an advocate for students.	SHB 3087 passed the legislature and will require institutions to try to reduce the cost of course materials to students, such as by providing more information to faculty and the public about the cost of course materials and providing students the option of purchasing unbundled course materials when possible.
Rigorous high school curriculum	The HECB sets minimum admission standards, defining the high school curriculum necessary for students to be admitted to the public baccalaureate institutions.	SHB 2706 did not pass. The bill would have required high school students entering ninth grade beginning in 2008-09 to take three credits of math, and students entering ninth grade beginning in 2012-13 to take four credits of math.
College and career readiness centers	The HECB is in the process of defining college readiness definitions in English and science, and has participated in the Transitions Math Project to define mathematics standards.	Neither SHB 3241 nor SSB 6821 passed. The bills would have either explored the creation of, or moved directly to establish, college and career readiness centers to offer basic education courses for students between the ages of 16 and 21.

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